

LIVERPOOL ANARCHIST

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Free Newsletter

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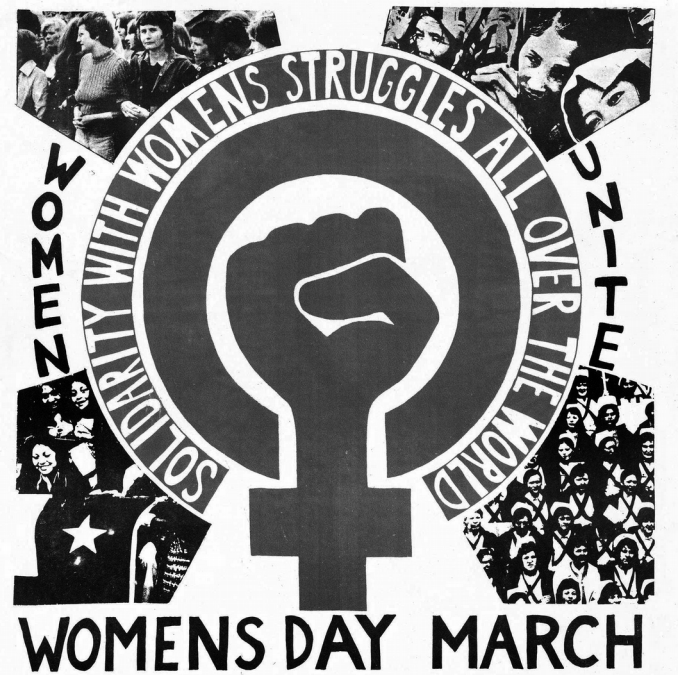
The roots of **International Women's Day** are to be found in the class struggle of textile workers in the USA at the beginning of the twentieth century. Strike after strike brought out working women against the conditions of life and work imposed on them by capitalist patriarchy. In the midst of this struggle, socialist women organised a National Woman's Day for the 28th February 1909, demanding equal rights and votes for women in large demonstrations and meetings across the country.

The first International Women's Day – following a proposal by Clara Zetkin and Luise Zietz at an international socialist women's conference the previous year – was held on 18th March 1911, on the fortieth anniversary of the Paris Commune. Across Central Europe, over one million women filled the streets and town halls for protests and meetings.

Over in Russia, 1917, the working class were pushed to their limits by the First World War, the hunger and grief it brought about, and the brutal oppression of the Tsar. International Women's Day was planned that year for the 8th of March (modern calendar). Against the advice of male-dominated political parties (revolutionary and otherwise), women from across Saint Petersburg



Women's demonstration, 8th of March 1917,
Saint Petersburg, Russia.



went on strike. Beginning in the textile mills – the most intensely exploited women – striking workers sent delegates to spread the revolt across the city. Somewhere around 100,000 people in all, the vast majority women, joined strikes and riots, which quickly escalated from calling for 'bread and peace' to demanding the end of autocracy. This was the start of the February Revolution, during which women played a key role in bringing the soldiers over to the side of the workers. By the 12th of March Tsar Nicholas II had been forced to abdicate, the workers' revolution was well underway, although the stage now set for the Bolshevik counter-revolution.

The day remained an event only in Comintern countries until around 1967 when it was revived by socialist-feminists in the USA, and since then it has been a tradition of international feminism. Today the event is largely co-opted by corporate sponsors and political opportunists. Rather than surrender our traditions, however, anarcho-feminists might seek to re-affirm the thread of working class militancy found in the origins of International Working Women's Day. •

MADE IN HALEWOOD

In 1968, 187 women sewing-machinists at Fords in Dagenham, London, went on strike for three weeks to get better wages. At the time they were classed as unskilled workers, due to being women, and so were paid less. Their appeals to the company over fairness were of course ignored, and the unions were hesitant to support them. However, they walked out anyway. The strike ended when they were promised an increase from 85% to 92% of the men's rate. It is also often cited as the reason the Equal Pay Act was passed in 1970, presumably to discourage further strike action by women across the country. Ironically the women at Fords only got equal pay in 1984 when they went on strike for seven more weeks.

The recent film *Made in Dagenham* has raised awareness of this strike, however, what is less well known is that they were joined by 195 machinists in Halewood. The union stewards Rosie Boland and Bernard Passingham from Dagenham went up to speak to workers at Halewood, and the women there decided to join them in walking out. This was despite staunch opposition from many men in the factory. Resistance from the union was also harsh in Halewood; when they held an international conference in Liverpool, delegates hadn't even heard of the dispute and the women weren't



invited (not that this stopped them from coming along anyway). Despite the barriers, women at both factories seem to agree that the strike at Halewood was just as important as Dagenham, and they joined them again in the 1984 strike.

Despite their struggle, equal pay still doesn't exist. For example, the University of Liverpool has a 22% gender pay gap. This isn't even touching upon the disproportionate unpaid work done by women or the fact that even if we achieved "equal pay" it would still mean equal exploitation of workers for profit. One of the strikers at Halewood, Frances Kirwin, recently stated that she didn't think women had come a long way since the strike. However, real improvements were won for the workers at the time. Let's remember that direct action and solidarity delivered for women at Halewood; not parliament, unions or bosses. •



Liverpool students occupy lecture theatre in support of the University strike.

"If we want to 'bring down the patriarchy', we need to talk about anarchism, to know exactly what it means, and to use that framework to transform ourselves and the structure of our daily lives. Feminism doesn't mean female corporate power or a woman President; it means no corporate power and no Presidents. The Equal Rights Amendment will not transform society; it only gives women the 'right' to plug into a hierarchical economy. Challenging sexism means challenging all hierarchy — economic, political, and personal. And that means an anarcha-feminist revolution."

~ Peggy Kornegger

LOCAL ANARCHISTS BLOCK ANTI-ABORTION PROTEST

On the 14th of February protestors opposed to female bodily autonomy gathered outside H&M on Church Street with a large banner of an 11 week old foetus, apparently talking nonsense about “women keeping their legs shut” and that even underage rape victims should be forced to go through with pregnancy. Anarchists and feminists from various local groups quickly responded to a callout during working hours and completely obscured the banner with their own until they left. The counter-protestors received wide public support, especially from youth climate-strikers.

Anarchists have a long tradition of supporting the right to choose, using direct action long before it was legalised. For example, the anarchist Madeleine Pelletier was interned in an asylum, where she died, for openly practicing abortions in 1939. Legislation comes and goes, it's important that we don't forget that we can resist attempts from the state to control our bodies. •



“Pushing anarchist feminism out of our small collective spaces and into the social arena means that we are willing to struggle for relevance within the movements of the working class. Our politics are more than just useful tools for managing our personal lives; they represent the blueprints for a world worth fighting and dying for.”

~ Black Rose Anarchist Federation

In Ireland anarchists played an active role in repealing anti-abortion laws.



Need support with domestic abuse or sexual assault?

Liverpool Domestic Abuse Service	0151 263 7474	Online form at: https://liverpooldomesticabuseservice.org.uk/contact-us/
Worst Kept Secret	0800 028 3398	Local helpline for anyone affected by domestic abuse, including family and friends.
Merseyside Domestic Violence Service	0778 094 8890	merseysidedvs@gmail.com
SAFE Place Merseyside	0151 295 3550	Sexual Assault Referral Centre
Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre	0151 666 1392	Based in Merseyside.
Amadudu Women's Refuge Liverpool	0151 734 0083	apro1986@aol.com
Grace House (South Liverpool refuge)	0151 734 1074	
Faye House (North Liverpool refuge)	0151 207 1511	
Women's Aid Helpline	0800 200 0247	Available 24/7
Men's Advice Line	0808 801 0327	info@mensadvice.org.uk

EVENTS THIS MARCH

4th – *Made in Dagenham* free film screening at Blackburne House, at 18:30

8th – Womenstrike march for International Women's Day at the Bombed out Church, 12:30, followed by stalls and after-party at Blackburne House from 16:00

12th – Talk on Mexican struggles since 1968 and screening of Guerrero organised by striking lecturers at Next to Nowhere, from 17:30

29th – Trans Pride march from Derby Square at 13:00

“People aren't free just because they are surviving, or even economically comfortable. They are free only when they have power over their own lives. Women, even more than most men, have very little power over their own lives. Gaining such autonomy, and insisting that everyone have it, is the major goal of anarchist feminists.”

~ Carol Ehrlich

LOCAL GROUPS

- ♦ **Food not Bombs** meet every Tuesday at Next to Nowhere from 4pm
- ♦ **Hunt Saboteurs** at lpoolhuntsabs@hotmail.co.uk or Facebook @LiverpoolHuntSabs
- ♦ **Louder than Proud** [queer collective] at louderthanproud@protonmail.com
- ♦ **Merseyside Anarchists** at merseysideanarchists@riseup.net
- ♦ **Merseyside Animal Rights Campaigns** on Facebook @MARcampaigns
- ♦ **Merseyside Anti-Fascist Network** on Facebook @MerseyAFN
- ♦ **Solidarity Federation** [anarcho-syndicalist initiative] at liverpoolsolfed@gmail.com



We aim to publish the *Liverpool Anarchist* monthly, and welcome all submissions in line with the following principles:

- ♦ *Anti-State*
- ♦ *Anti-Capitalist*
- ♦ *Intersectional*

Send in feedback, comments, and submissions to:

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You can find us online at:

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